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FORMER GOVERNOR AND EXECUTIVE IN RESIDENCE JIM DOUGLAS '72 SUES MIDDLEBURY OVER CHAPEL NAME REMOVAL

By RACHEL LU
Editor at Large

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The college removed John Abner Mead's name from the chapel last fall.

Former Vermont Governor and executive in residence at the college, Jim Douglas '72, filed a lawsuit against the college on Friday March 24, contesting the removal of the "Mead Memorial Chapel" name from the building. The decision that the chapel would no longer bear the name of John A. Mead was enacted in September 2021, due to Mead's role in advocating and promoting eugenics policies in Vermont in the early 1900s.

After the college's decision last year, Douglas said he twice asked the college administration to reconsider to no avail. Now, he has been appointed Special Administrator of the Estate of John Abner Mead and is suing the college as a representative of the Mead family.

The lawsuit

The 79-page complaint was filed by Douglas at the Vermont Superior Court, Addison County division. According to Douglas, the family of Mead contacted him soon after the college's decision to remove Mead's name.

The lawsuit claimed that the removal of Mead's name is a breach of contract. In a series of letters between Mead and Rev. Dr. John M. Thomas, who served as president of the college from the early 1910s, Mead requested that the chapel be known as "Mead Memorial Chapel" and paid $75,373.34 for the construction of the chapel, which is equivalent to $2,237,058.12 in today's money.

"The most essential argument is, Governor Mead gave the college a chapel and now the college is essentially taking it away," Douglas told the Campus.

Douglas also claims in the lawsuit that the college has benefited tremendously from the chapel in intervening years. The chapel has hosted numerous convocations, baccalaureates, student performances and regular religious services. As a prominent feature of the Middlebury skyline, the image of the chapel frequently appears on the college's promotional materials.

According to Douglas, the Mead family is not seeking monetary compensation. The goal is to restore Mead's name to the chapel, thereby re-establishing the integrity of the gift and the reputation of Mead.

"We feel that it is a real miscarriage of justice and completely unfair to him and to his legacy," Douglas said.

Cancel culture

Douglas' complaint hinges on his grievances over cancel culture. According to Douglas, the accusations of Mead's role in the eugenics movement are not representative of the entirety of Mead's legacy. For Douglas, the erasure of Mead's name "canceled" Mead and disparaged the family name.

The college's email to the community cited Mead's farewell speech as governor in 1912 to demonstrate his promotion of policies and legislation premised on eugenics theory, which was used as evidence to show that his actions counter the values of the college as an institution.

"John Mead is a lot more than a couple of paragraphs in a 1912 speech, I think that is my biggest complaint about this," Douglas said. "It's important to humanize him since [the college] put out a press release in 2021 basically calling him a racist, without using the word but implied it. He joined the union army when he was still in college. He was anything but racist, he was fighting slavery. That is just offensive and we want to call [the college] out on that."

Douglas previously expressed his dismay over cancel culture at the college in an article published in The New York Sun when he boycotted his 50th reunion at the college.

"It's not fair, things change. Our values change and our sensibilities change. I think everybody has to understand that it was a different era. Governor Mead's views, although [students] might not find them palatable today, were quite mainstream," Douglas said.

According to Charles A. Dana Professor of Political Science Eric Bleich, the phrase "cancel culture" has evolved over time, and is typically used as a complaint and is not a legal term. It typically refers to the ostracization of someone from the community after they have misspoken. Its use as a complaint in reference to removing names from buildings is less common but not unprecedented.

The term is not free from political associations. "It is a term more commonly used on the right of the political spectrum to complain about actions coming from the left," Bleich said, "Firing someone, deplatforming someone, removing statues or names from a building because of racist, sexist, or homophobic statements — the right typically complains loudly about those sorts of steps."

In Bleich's view, the removal of a building's name does not equate to a person's complete erasure from the history of the institution.

"If a building loses its name or statue gets removed, it doesn't make that person less important to the history of the institution, but it means that the memory of that person is less visible in the daily lives of the people on that campus," Bleich said.

Former journalist at the Burlington Free Press Kevin Ellis, who followed Douglas' political

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LOCAL

Community mourns Rebecca Ball, missing Middlebury teen found dead Tuesday

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Senior Local Editor

After days of searching, a canine team found missing Middlebury teen Rebecca Ball dead on Tuesday afternoon, Seven Days reported Tuesday night.

Ball's body was discovered in Weybridge on the west side of Otter Creek and north of Belden Falls. Ball, a seventeen-year-old senior at Middlebury Union High School, was last seen at about 3:45 p.m. last Wednesday near the southern end of Wright Park.

In a press release issued at 9:16 p.m. on Tuesday, state police confirmed the recovery of Ball's body at 4:26 p.m. about a mile off of the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) path through Belden Falls, according to reporting from The Addison Independent. Police said her death is not considered suspicious, according to Seven Days' reporting, but a medical examiner will conduct an autopsy.

Organizers of a Facebook page dedicated to the search for Ball held a gathering at the Middlebury Recreation Center on Wednesday morning to remember Ball's life.

Ball's mother, Jeanne Fair, wrote on the Facebook page Tuesday evening, "Thank you all for looking for my baby girl."

In addition to there being no signs of foul play, Hanley told The Addison Independent that there is no evidence to suggest Ball committed an act of self-harm.

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Innovation Hub receives $5 million donation from Kelson Foundation

By MANDY BERGHELA
SGA Correspondent

Middlebury recently announced that the Innovation Hub will be receiving a $5 million gift from the Kelson Foundation in order to support creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship on campus. The goal of the donation is to provide all students with the opportunity to take creative risks and share their ideas without any barriers.

The Kelson Foundation is a private non-profit organization founded in 2017 and currently based in San Francisco. The mission of the organization is to support programs that provide the possibility for everyone, especially those underserved and overlooked, to foster their own growth.

Jake Mortiz '11 is the current president of the Kelson Foundation and hopes to give back to the Middlebury community to make sure that all Middlebury students have the opportunity to create and try out their endeavors in a supportive environment.

"I graduated from Middlebury in 2011. At the time, the entrepreneurship programs that included MiddCore, summer internships, Oratory Now and others were just getting started, or hadn't even begun. My classmates and I played a small role in helping to form and steer the programs, with the direction and support of [Director of the Programs on Creativity and Innovation in the Liberal Arts] Liz Robinson," Mortiz said.

The donation will honor Elizabeth (Liz) Hackett Robinson '84 who has been a longtime mentor for Moritz, as well as many other Middlebury students in years past. Robinson founded the Programs on Creativity and Innovation in 2007, which has evolved into focusing on internships, social entrepreneurship, public speaking and global health initiatives for students. The Innovation Hub will now be known as the Elizabeth Hackett Robinson '84 Innovation Hub..

"I wanted to honor Liz's work and contribution to the school," Moritz said. "As well as help ensure that students in years to come would have ample opportunity to experiment, build, and mess up, as a complement to their classroom experience."

Robinson herself is excited for the opportunities the donation will give for many of the programs. "This incredible endowment will support the core creativity and innovation programs at the Innovation Hub, such as Old Stone Mill, MiddChallenge, Vermont Innovation Summer, MiddEntrepreneurs, TEDxMiddlebury, the Hunt, MiddDev, MiddSTART, Vermont Ventures Trips, and just as important, it will help secure the professional staffing needed to effectively run these programs and advise students," Robinson said in an email to The Campus.

The Innovation Hub, located on Blinn Lane, guides and supports students who want to learn and build skills in innovation through many programs and events that range from working on strategic thinking and leadership skills to providing work spaces for students and many more unique opportunities.

"All students who are curious about creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and social impact are welcome to participate in Hub programs," said Heather Lovejoy '08, director of the Innovation Hub. "A student interested in an introduction to our programs may join a Vermont Ventures Trip to a local business or participate in a design-thinking workshop, while a student with a project idea may become a tenant to use the space at the Old Stone Mill or receive a MiddChallenge grant to work on their idea over a summer."

One of the spaces the Innovation Hub provides is the Old Stone Mill in the heart of downtown Middlebury. It provides a space for students to develop creative projects or entrepreneurial startups all under one roof.

Athena Antippas '26 is a current tenant at the Old Stone Mill and owns a nail tech start-up called Nails by Athena. "Being a tenant with the Old Stone Mill has been a great experience and allowed me to have a workspace of my own. I am very excited about this donation, and I do hope it is invested back into the students, perhaps partially in grant funding so that students could apply to use it for funding their projects and small businesses," Antippas said.

Students that have ideas for projects can use the Old Stone Mill space, and in some cases may be given grants in order to pursue their interests. MiddChallenge helps turn student projects into a reality — the program selects two proposals every year in which students receive $4,000 for a summer project.

Lynn Yan '24.5, a 2022 MiddChallenge recipient, used her grant money and was given the opportunity to paint a mural depicting student mental health at the Old Stone Mill.

"I spent the summer painting murals as a studio art and psychology double major," Yan

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Middlebury alum helped produce Rihanna's Super Bowl LVII halftime show

By DANIZA TAZABEKOVA
Journalism Fellow

Ben Schiffer '09.5 helped to create the suspended platform stages and ensure Rihanna's safety during her Super Bowl LVII halftime show, which was the second most-viewed halftime show in history.

TAIT Towers, the performance staging company Schiffer works for as a mechanical integrator – someone who designs and develops production units – was hired by Rihanna's show designers and production managers to help develop the floating platforms in the show. Schiffer first found out he would be working on the halftime show in late October of last year and joined the development team on Jan. 17.

"There were many ideas, people, designers and engineers involved prior to getting to the point where I was involved in the process," Schiffer said. "I specifically worked with the rehearsal team and technical team on site getting the show built, running the show and deconstructing the show."

Overall, the halftime show was an "amazing experience" for Schiffer.

"A lot of hard work from a lot of excellent technicians. There was so much to learn out there, from new little technical tricks to certain self-limitations when climbing around 210 feet in the ceiling of State Farm Stadium," Schiffer said. "I guess I learned that, in some way, once you tune out 80,000 live fans and 200 million at home viewers, running a show like the Super Bowl is just like any other, but it sure is hard to not think about how many people are watching."

Schiffer participated in a week of rehearsals in Los Angeles at the end of January before the team moved to Glendale, Ariz. After that, rehearsals were split between State Farm Stadium, where the game took place, and an off-site location. Schiffer and the development teams completed a total of three weeks of rehearsals leading up to the halftime show to test the system.

> "...Once you tune out 80,000 live fans and 200 million at home viewers, running a show like the Super Bowl is just like any other, but it sure is hard to not think about how many people are watching."

"The system was extremely creative in that it used state-of-the-art winches designed by TAIT and utilized counterweight arbor systems like you would find in a traditional theater setting. We also used a secondary counter weight system to be able to store the platforms in the air, out of the way so the game could happen," Schiffer said.

Schiffer's main role in pre-production was to create and write a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for any performer who would be on the platforms. This involved creating a training plan that would acclimate the performers to the floating platforms and allow them to execute choreography while having a safety tether attached at their waist. Dancers would practice riding the platforms to various heights, then rehearse choreography both at height and while moving.

"Any rig this big is going to have its challenges, but as a team, we found solutions in order to be able to keep these platforms stable and running smoothly," Schiffer said.

During the show, Schiffer was on the field watching the performers and the system as a "spotter." There were multiple spotters on the sidelines and field in order to ensure maximum safety to all performers on the platforms and under them.

"When Rihanna was performing, my main responsibility was her safety system, belt and tether," Schiffer said. "It was my job to confirm she was secure on the platform at the top of the show, clear the platform when she exited and new dancers came on, then confirm she was reconnected when going back up for the final lift."

Schiffer said his experience with the Middlebury Theater Department equipped him with the skills necessary to work on big projects like this.

"My experience at Middlebury plays into my skills at work daily; from critical thinking to being able to clearly and concisely execute those ideas — my Middlebury education fostered that," Schiffer said. "In Middlebury's Theater Department, I learned how to work in technical and creative teams, as well as when and how to share my thoughts on a project in a constructive manner. These are skills that I think Middlebury teaches well and are useful no matter what field you go into."

Former governor and executive in residence Jim Douglas '72 sues Middlebury over chapel name removal

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career since the early 2000s, was disappointed to see Douglas claim the name removal was an instance of cancel culture in the article and now the lawsuit. Instead of engaging in serious conversations and education, Ellis said Douglas is opting for the "intellectually easy" route.

"He grew up, as did I, in an America that was safe, protected and privileged for white men," Ellis said. "We grew up in a system designed for us and by us. People of color, LGBTQ, marginalized people at every level are saying, 'we don't like that system and we would like to change it.' Instead of engaging with those people on serious issues, he chooses to publish his one-shot commentary."

Douglas' complaint also notes the college's lack of transparency during the process of removing Mead's name from the chapel. "The College issued no warning that the name would be removed, held no public discussion and offered no hint that such a dramatic change would occur," he wrote in the legal complaint.

According to the email sent out by the college after the name was taken down, the decision was advised by a working group for the President to recommend to the Board of Trustees to remove "Mead" as part of the building's name. Following the college's protocol, the recommendation was forwarded to the Prudential Committee of the Board of Trustees who has the authority to act on behalf of the full board. The Board voted unanimously to remove Mead's name.

In Bleich's view, freedom of speech allows the administration to listen to input and debate from both sides of the argument, and make a political consideration for the institution.

"Freedom of speech is happening on both sides as these issues are being debated," he said. "The administration makes a decision not based on freedom of speech but based on other considerations, more political considerations."

The governors' legacies

Douglas and Mead, both graduates of the college and both former Vermont governors, share stark similarities in their careers. Douglas said that as one of few men who have held the gubernatorial office in the state, he feels a personal connection to Mead.

Douglas' own legacy is not free from controversy: as a moderate Republican governor, he stood in opposition to the overwhelmingly liberal Vermont legislature at the time. In 2009, Douglas vetoed a bill to legalize same-sex marriage, which the Senate voted 23–5 and the House voted 100–49 to override.

In response to whether the "cancellation" of Mead threatens the preservation of his own legacy, Douglas said, "At the time, both Clinton and Obama agreed with me, but times change. Times have changed since Mead's time too. Who knows what people will do a century later?"

According to Ellis, the lawsuit is consistent with Douglas' position against gay marriage, and speculates that it is an attempt for Douglas to position himself in the future of the Republican party.

"I think his greater agenda is to protect a system that protected him and empowered him, and he is afraid of that system eroding and his power going away. Now the people who were marginalized by that system are angry and they want to be treated equally and fairly, and he can't deal with it," Ellis said. "That was symbolized in stark reality by his veto of the same-sex marriage bill that was overwhelmingly approved by the Vermont legislature and favored by the people of the state."

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The lawsuit claims that the removal of Mead's name constitutes a breach of contract.

When asked if the lawsuit serves a greater national agenda, Douglas said he does not see this as a partisan issue. He is currently a member of the Governor's Council for the Bipartisan Policy Center where he co-chairs the task force for Campus Free Expression. The task force published a report that provides a roadmap for leading institutions facing the erosion of a campus culture of free expression and open inquiry.

Teaching at the college

Douglas has been the most outspoken advocate at the college for restoring Mead's name. Douglas said his action will benefit the Middlebury community through educating the students using knowledge about history rather than the erasure of it.

Douglas was appointed as executive in residence at the college in 2010. Most recently, he co-taught the first year seminar American President Biography with Professor of Political Science Matt Dickinson and a J-Term class on Vermont Politics. He was also the advisor to the College Republicans club on campus, but the organization is not currently active.

Cody Mattice '24 has taken two classes with Douglas at the college. According to Mattice, Douglas' role is to provide a personal perspective on the issues discussed in class through his own career in politics. Mattice said Douglas fosters a classroom environment that encourages free discussion.

"In my experience as a student I feel like you can talk to him about these things," Mattice said. "In the context of our seminar we had a lot of debates as well and things weren't being shut down."

However, Mattice said the lawsuit has changed his previous perception of Douglas as a teacher.

"This very much changes how I see Governor Douglas. This was not something I thought he would do, and the fact that he is taking this conservative 'culture warrior' stance surprises me," Mattice said. "It surprised me that this is something he would take legal action over, it seems out of character to me."

Douglas said he does not espouse political views in class and believes his classes provide educational opportunities that are apolitical.

In response to the suggestion that students may be uncomfortable with Douglas' political views, he said, "My record is pretty open, so if students don't want to know about it, they can decide not to take the class. It's not mandatory."

Nevertheless, Douglas expresses dissatisfaction with the presence of a predominantly liberal student body at the college and broadly in the state of Vermont.

"I wish it was more balanced, to be perfectly honest, and I wish too for the faculty and the administration. I think communities are better when they are more diverse, and I'm starting to feel that way about Vermont in general. It's changed so much. I think communities would be stronger, more vibrant, more successful if they were more diverse," Doulgas said. "Diverse ideologically," he added.

Ellis questions whether Douglas' presence at the college is contradictory to his stance in the lawsuit.

"If he believes this [the lawsuit], then why is he still teaching at Middlebury College?" Ellis said. "Why is he still accepting a paycheck from the college? If he was principled about this, he would resign, and he hasn't done it."

Douglas is not currently teaching a class this semester, but he is active on the college campus as an executive in residence. He is scheduled to teach a first year seminar with Dickinson next fall.

The college's role in the Eugenics Movement

Amidst discussions over the lawsuit, an examination of Mead's role in eugenics and the college's involvement in the movement and other structural forms of injustices have fallen by the wayside. Professor of Gender, Sexuality, Feminist Studies Laurie Essig, who refers to the Chapel as "the Chapel formerly known as Mead," said the college failed to take the opportunity to engage in widespread discussions over the legacy and impact of the eugenics movement.

Aside from the initial September 2021 email sent to the community detailing the decision to remove Mead's name, the college has not otherwise opened discussion on the eugenics movement.

"What's more interesting to me than Jim Douglas' claims, is that eugenics were and are very central to the way in which American elites saw and see the world," Essig said. "Eugenics didn't just go away, it's still here. Not having that conversation seems like a lost opportunity, as a community and as an educational center, to talk about what eugenics were and how that continues to structure much of our thinking."

Mercedes de Guardiola is a New York-based innovation and strategy consultant and historian; her article "Segregation or Sterilization: Eugenics in the 1912 Vermont State Legislative Session" was published in Vermont History. In her research, De Guardiola named Mead as a strong advocate for eugenic policies in Vermont.

"By Governor Mead's speech in 1912, public policy in Vermont was failing: Vermonters were sent to poor farms or overcrowded and underfunded state institutions, including the mental asylum and the juvenile penitentiary," De Guardiola told the Campus. "Mead decided the crisis was a problem of heredity, not a failure of public policy, and, after two years of research, as governor advocated strongly for eugenics."

De Guardiola's research found that Mead proposed eugenical marriage restrictions, segregation and sterilization, which solidified the foundations for Henry F. Perkins' Eugenics Survey of Vermont (1925–1936) and led to Vermont's legalization of voluntary eugenical sterilization in 1931.

Mead was the first to introduce eugenics as public policy in Vermont, and publicly voiced the fear over increased "degeneracy" in the state while suggesting a direct hereditary link for mental illnesses.

Mead proposed that the "defective class" may be transmitted to offspring. He said, in his 1912 farewell speech when he was departing the governorship, "That this class is prolific, knowing no law of self-restraint, and consequently defectives are increasing in numbers and are of a more pronounced type. What can be done to protect society from these unfortunates and what to protect them from themselves?"

According to De Guardiola, eugenics was a cornerstone of public policy at a local, state and national level in America well into the late 20th century. American institutions of higher education including Yale, Harvard and Stanford were leaders in the eugenics movement.

In an op-ed published in The Campus, Associate Professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies Daniel Silva presented research findings on Middlebury's role in eugenics. For the first decade of the 20th century, eugenics emerged in the college's course offerings in departments such as Pedagogy (later renamed Education and Psychology), Biology and Sociology. In the course catalog of 1913, eugenic ideas could be found in the descriptions of courses such as "Genetics and Embryology," "Social Psychology," and "Educational Psychology," and almost the entire course offering in the Sociology department. This trend follows the academic mainstream at most universities in North America and Europe.

"It is, therefore, not a stretch to consider that eugenicists and eugenics sympathizers, were, to some degree, trained at Middlebury," Silva wrote.

The legacy of eugenics also sheds light on the history of systematic displacement and exploitation. "History does not exist in a vacuum: It is helpful to understand the issues we face today and in the future — such as homelessness and mental health — by studying the decades-long history of eugenics," De Guardiola said.

This includes conversations surrounding Middlebury's role in colonial history, problems with accessibility and the decolonization of its curriculum. Essig suggested that the college should host a conference on eugenics at Middlebury with events, speakers and documentaries to engage the community in conversation.

"I don't think that taking the name off did the educational work of talking about eugenics. All of us who live at Middlebury benefit from the exploitation of those systems, whether it's the possession of land from native people, or white supremacy, or the economic effects of slavery," Essig said.

Due to ongoing litigation, the college administration was unable to comment.

Crossroad prices increase up to 15% in response to inflation

Tom Nevins/The Middlebury Campus

Dining Services made the decision to raise prices 7–15% at Crossroads Cafe, effective after spring break.

By KIRSTEN TING
Contributing Writer

Taped to the counter of Crossroads Cafe, a small square of paper reads "Due to inflation, our prices have increased." While the student-run campus cafe, located in McCullough Student Center, has typically kept costs relatively low — with $4.50–5 smoothies and lattes starting around $3.15 — inflation has forced Middlebury to reevaluate certain aspects of college dining.

According to Dan Detora, executive director of food service operations at Middlebury, the college's Dining Services are grappling with a 30% increase in food costs, with a 31% increase in coffee specifically. This has resulted in some small shifts in the food offerings around campus. In a March 9 article in The Campus, some students remarked on the disappearance of certain beloved dining hall fare.

Though they've tried their best to keep the pressure of inflation off students by limiting price increases across retail operations on campus, Dining Services made the decision to change prices at Crossroads Cafe by adding a 7–15% increase to items (for example, a $4.50 latte would now be $5.15), effective immediately after spring break.

"We have an obligation to get as close to breaking even as we can," Detora said. "We're just trying to bridge that gap between inflation." Detora's end goal is just to be able to keep Crossroads open.

"I've noticed that less and less people are getting non-dairy milk," Barista Amina Matavia '23 said. "It might be that the trend for non-dairy milks is dying along with the fact that everything is so expensive now that people might think that the extra 85 cents for oat milk isn't worth it anymore."

Some students who spoke to The Campus do not mind the change in prices. "I didn't even notice that prices had changed," Elaine Zhang '23 said. However, other students are concerned about future increases in price.

"I mean I don't really mind the increase now," Oliscia Thornton '26 said. "Especially since it's so small, but I think that if prices continue to climb, then that could be a problem."

Similarly, Orlando Caceres '25 said, "I think it's always unfortunate when prices go up, but there's reasons for it, so we just do what we can."

While Malia Rutherford '26 still plans on going to Crossroads, she noted how she felt price tags across the college were increasing.

"The timing of the price increase is kind of inconvenient, especially after they announced that tuition is increasing," she said. "It just feels like everything is getting more expensive."

The decision to raise prices at Crossroads comes just a month after Kim Downs-Burns, associate vice-president of Student Financial Services, emailed students about a 4.5% rise in tuition. In the email, Downs-Burns stresses the college's commitment to "keeping the increase lower than the rate of inflation, which currently sits at over 6 percent."

Scholar discusses combating mental illness among school-age children in rural China

By LIV SANCHEZ
Contributing Writer

Scott Rozelle, a Stanford University professor and economist specializing in development, returned to Middlebury on March 29 to speak about his research on combating mental health among school children in rural China. Rozelle, who holds a doctorate from Cornell University, is one of the co-directors of the Rural Education Action Program (REAP) at Stanford. This is the fourth time Rozelle has visited Middlebury.

Frederick C. Dirks Professor of Economics Will Pyle introduced Rozelle and explained how REAP is "all about making life better for the 10% of humanity that lives in rural China." Rozelle, who has studied poverty for years, came to focus on the mental health issues among students in rural China as a means of furthering the economic development of the country as a whole.

Rozelle explained that the rural-urban divide in China's economic structure leaves people in rural areas with fewer opportunities. "No one in this rural economy, which has 600 million workers, no one can do a white-collar job," he said. "How does China graduate to become a high-income country? That's when I started to say, well it's obviously a problem in rural China, and so I started working on REAP."

Rozelle referred to the vast divide between rural and urban Chinese citizens, likening it to a "caste system more rigid than India's." Rural citizens are presented with fewer resources and opportunities than their urban counterparts, according to Rozelle. He explained that students in rural China, on average, were 0.75–1 semester behind in learning compared to their urban counterparts, according to field research carried out by REAP. This research estimated that 31% of rural students dropped out of school before completing nine years of studies, and only 15% tested into high school. And according to Rozelle, "Mental health problems among children in rural China are severely understudied, even though one out of every nine children on earth is growing up in rural China."

REAP's focus is improving mental health issues among children in rural China in the hopes that this will lower the dropout rate, help students to perform better academically and pave the way for white-collar careers.

According to Rozelle, it is a seemingly insurmountable task. China has the highest suicide rate among school-aged children in the world. However, for the 400 million children living in China, there are only 500 child psychologists, most of whom are located in urban areas. "Depression and anxiety rates among rural students are nearly 10 times higher than the global prevalence among school age children. It's almost all learning anxiety... just because it's so competitive and there's so much pressure from family, from classmates..." Rozelle said.

REAP also aims to study students with ADHD, which, according to Rozelle, "is an ignored issue in rural China, though the prevalence of ADHD is close to the worldwide rate."

Rozelle also spoke of another barrier to education for rural students. Due to population decline, many schools in rural villages have been shut down, requiring that some students commute for hours. As a result, around a third of rural Chinese six-year-olds live in boarding schools.

"This isn't Andover or Exeter, this is, put them in a bunk and tell them to shut up," Rozelle said. "And a huge problem is bullying."

Rozelle reported that three out of every four rural Chinese children claim to be the victim of bullying, the highest rate worldwide. In addressing mental health issues, REAP hopes to lower this statistic.

Since 2019, REAP has focused on four initiatives in particular, the first of which is to create mental health toolkits and make them accessible to rural schools. REAP's second initiative is improving student resilience levels, through Social Emotional Learning programs (SEL). The SEL program consists of a year-long curriculum meant to be taught for one class period a week, addressing units such as "understanding teachers care," "seeking help" and "emotional control." Students also receive weekly counseling sessions.

Of the SEL program, Rozelle said, "The kids loved it!" One month after the implementation of the program, Rozelle noticed a 15% drop in non-learning anxiety amongst the tested students. However, the maintenance of the program proved difficult, as many teachers could not find time for the curriculum, or eschewed the program altogether under pressure from principals or parents. Rozelle hopes, "improving resilience might help students cope with mental health problems."

The third REAP initiative is the exploration of the impact of mindfulness on students.

"We trained volunteers in Shanghai... to go into migrant schools and they ran these after-school mindfulness programs," Rozelle explained. Upon testing and retesting the children, their math scores improved following the implementation of the program, but their reported level of mental health issues also increased. Rozelle attributes this, drawing from interviews and investigations conducted by REAP after the surprising findings, to the students' newfound ability to recognize and name their mental health issues after learning about their existence through REAP.

The last initiative is a home-based intervention to improve maternal mental health.

Rozelle explained how, due to stigma, results of the toolkit initiative were frustratingly obscured. In one instance, a principal of a rural school covered up the truthful figures on the number of children suffering from mental illness in his school because "he was thinking, what if someone thinks this is my problem?"

He also said that sometimes even the true results prove difficult for people to accept: "We've published a bunch of papers on this," he said, "and the biggest problem we get from editors is them saying, 'It's impossible that 67% of your kids have mental illness. Nowhere in the world is the percentage above 30%,' they say, and I retort, 'Welcome to rural China.'"

Jaden Roderique '24 attended Rozelle's talk because he is especially interested in the ramifications of the Chinese government's strict policies concerning their citizens' lives. "It was really insightful, hearing about mental health in China, especially within younger age groups, where it's really important to... make sure learning environments are comfortable for everyone," Roderique said.

Grace Mtunguja '26 was surprised by Rozelle's talk.

"I had no idea about any of these issues. It's just difficult, because there are so many issues in the world, it's hard to choose a few to focus on," Mtunguja said. Rozelle's talk was the first she has attended at Middlebury, and she said that it "inspired [her] to go to many more."

INNOVATION HUB RECEIVES $5 MILLION DONATION FROM KELSON FOUNDATION

Continued from Page 1

said. "The grant single handedly funded my journey as a muralist and allowed me to show off my art as an international Asian artist. It made such a large scale art project affordable and accessible to me."

Sam Segal '23, another student who received funding from the Innovation Hub, took his grant in a different direction through the help of alumni connections the Hub provided, which later turned into mentors that help him to this day. Segal helped found another program within the Hub called MiddVentures which provides assistance to Middlebury entrepreneurs in their potential endeavors, and helps host MiddChallenge, from which Segal received grant money previously to help take his startup Bulletpitch to the next level.

"Through the funding, I was able to buy software and explore growth strategies, which have helped my team create a name for ourselves in the startup ecosystem." Segal said. "Conversations with Heather and other Hub staff have been extremely helpful, fulfilling, and transformational in my Middlebury experience."

Both students and Hub faculty are excited about the donation and the opportunities it will provide for future students at Middlebury.

"I was thrilled to find out that the Innovation Hub received a 5 million dollar donation," Segal said. "I can only imagine how the Hub will transform to add more programming and resources to foster innovation on campus. I find an entrepreneurial education to be useful for any career path, and through the funding, the Innovation Hub will be able to amplify this message and impact an even bigger share of the student body."

The Hub's success has even been noticed outside of the college, as Middlebury has built an incubator for entrepreneurship because of the Hub's programs.

Middlebury has a decades-long partnership with the Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies (VCET) which helps startups develop their businesses in the state of Vermont, and many have started at the Innovation Hub. Sam Roach-Gerber, the vice president of VCET, spoke to the impact the Innovation Hub has on student's potential. "We have seen firsthand that the Hub's programs are truly life changing for students. Innovation and entrepreneurship creates a lens that allows students to see themselves in a whole new light. It helps them crystalize their paths after graduation, and gives them the confidence to create change that the world so desperately needs," Roach-Gerber said.

"At Middlebury, students are able to take real-world skills and apply it to their liberal-arts education in order to pioneer new ideas and solve important problems, which is unique," Robinson said. "Middlebury has a powerful tradition of creativity and innovation that has sustained the institution for more than 200 years. I am proud that so many have made the Innovation Hub become an integral part of this important tradition."

Daleelah Saleh/The Middlebury Campus

The Innovation Hub is located at 132 Blinn Lane.

American Flatbread fire undergoing investigation, ruled "suspicious"

By CHARLIE FISCH
Staff Writer

Charlie Fisch/The Middlebury Campus
The American Flatbread shed that was on fire on March 13.

A fire at the American Flatbread restaurant in Marble Works on Monday, March 13 has been labeled as "suspicious" and is currently being investigated by the Middlebury Police Department.

The Middlebury Fire Department received a call at 9:27 p.m. on March 13 reporting a structural fire in a woodshed outside of the restaurant, according to department records. The shed sits between the two main Marble Works buildings, putting both larger structures at risk of catching fire.

The fire department was en route to the site at 9:32 p.m. and arrived two minutes later. By 9:50 p.m., the fire was under control.

According to Fire Chief David Shaw, who was responsible for determining the cause and origin of the fire, the amount of fire spread within the structure made it suspicious to him. American Flatbread was closed on the day of the fire, so there were no employees present at that time.

Shaw told The Campus that the entire structure was consumed by flames as tall as 25 feet by the time they arrived. The fire had begun to affect the surrounding buildings at that point, leaving minor heat damage on the main Marble Works complex.

After his primary assessment of the fire, Shaw contacted the Addison County Firefighters Association Investigation Team and Vermont State Police to conduct a further investigation. "My suspicions were that this was not an accidental fire; this fire was an intentionally set fire," Shaw said.

The fire is currently listed as "suspicious" and is under investigation. Due to concern about compromising the investigation, further information is not available at this time.

Shaw did confirm, however, that this was an isolated incident and said he did not believe there was any further danger to the community. The Middlebury Police Department was not able to be reached for comment on the status of the investigation.

The shed, which was completely destroyed in the fire, stored the wood that American Flatbread seasons and uses for their pizza-making.

According to Danielle Boyce, owner and general manager of American Flatbread, the restaurant's wood store, wood boxes and a compost trove were lost in the fire. Despite these losses, the restaurant's wood supplier immediately ordered more wood and sought a new supplier to procure more seasoned wood to meet the restaurant's immediate needs. As a result, business at the restaurant was able to continue as usual, and service was unaffected by the fire.

Boyce also told The Campus that Flatbread staff was somewhat rattled after the fire. While the restaurant operated as planned the week of the fire, higher-level staff such as the head chef and head bartender were concerned by the incident. Boyce said she is, of course, invested in the restaurant she owns, and as a result felt somewhat targeted by the fire.

Repairs to the shed are just beginning to be approved by the restaurant's insurance agency and are anticipated to move forward slowly. The restaurant received clearance to tear the shed down, a process that Boyce said she is anxious to start.

"That's a huge first step. I don't want to look at it anymore, and I don't want the public to have to look at it anymore, so that should be happening any day now. I'll just feel better once it's down," Boyce said.

While Boyce was careful not to compromise the investigation, she stated that her final goal is not retribution. She said she expects the investigation process to be complex, but ultimately wants to protect her business and her staff and hopes that the investigation will relieve some of the pressure she feels to do so. "It doesn't really matter to me if this person 'pays,' so to speak, but it's more that I just want to feel safe," Boyce added.

The beginning of the investigation felt uncertain, Boyce said, as she was unsure about the next steps and had little information about the process. A few weeks out from the incident, Boyce said she is satisfied with the police response to the fire.

The Middlebury Police continue their investigation, and Marble Works will install more security cameras to prevent future events.

Both Shaw and Boyce highlighted that this event was unusual for the Middlebury community and is still under investigation. "Right now, it feels really weird that such a big thing happened in Middlebury, and not really a lot of people are aware or talking about it," Boyce said.

College and Summit Properties affordable housing project receives state grant

By COLE CHAUDHARI
Staff Writer

An affordable housing initiative being developed by Middlebury College and South Burlington-based Summit Properties received $6,075,405 in grant funding from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) to subsidize the cost of constructing approximately 100 new units of housing.

The project began in April 2022, when the college purchased a 35-acre parcel of land on Seminary Street Extension for $1.5 million. Intended to address the historically sparse and expensive housing available for faculty and staff of the college, the ongoing development project hopes to provide flexible living options that range from studio apartments to multi-family homes. In addition to serving employees of the college, the new housing will provide more accessible housing options for employees of Porter Medical Center and other local businesses.

The project is currently in the design and permit phase, as Summit Properties is working closely with town leadership to construct and revise blueprints of the new neighborhood.

"Permitting is a three-step process," Zeke Davisson, chief operating officer of Summit Properties told The Campus in an email, "[including] Sketch Plan Review, Preliminary Plan/Plat and Final Plan."

"Financing is ongoing, but we are in a busy period right now for state and federal infrastructure financing applications," Davidson added.

The new grant funding from the Housing Finance Agency will help offset the expected $40 million total cost of the housing project. The college's initial $1.5 million investment will be repaid to them by Summit over the next five to six years.

In an email to The Campus, David Provost, executive vice president of Finance and Administration said that the new grant money from the VHFA will plug the "missing middle" in the project, "bolster[ing] Summit's ability to offset the cost of construction [and] allowing many college employees and other townspeople to qualify to live in these units."

The new funding from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency is sourced from the organization's Missing Middle-Income Homeownership Program, which aims to increase the rates of homeownership among Vermont residents that fall at average income levels.

"The total statewide awards of $14.2 million through the program was the biggest one-time investment in affordable homeownership ever made by the State of Vermont," Davisson said."[Summit's] award for the Middlebury community was more than 40% of that total."

An affordable housing initiative, and particularly one of this scale, requires the intermingling and cooperation of many moving parts. The complexity of the process is magnified in a small, rural town like Middlebury, according to Davisson. "There are a huge number of variables that need to come together. We've found everyone in this community is pulling the same oar to make it a reality," he said.

Courtesy of Zeke Davisson
The Summit Properties housing development project will be located on parcel of land on Seminary Street Extension.

Community mourns Rebecca Ball, missing Middlebury teen found dead Tuesday

Continued from Page 1

Hanley added that Ball had shown a history of "walking off," and in these instances the police department would find her and bring her home.

While Hanley said that Ball had maintained a respectful relationship with the police department, showing willingness to go with officers when they approached her, she often did not respond well to hailing efforts such as shouting her name in the wilderness. He added that Ball's lack of winter clothing, phone, water and her medication when she wandered off this time likely resulted in her death.

"We won't know definitively until we get the medical examiner's report, but this appears to be just an issue of exposure to the elements and hypothermia," Hanley told The Addison Independent. "There's no indication there were any injuries."

Middlebury Police Department officers began searching for Ball on March 29 in Wright Park, where Ball was last seen. According to reporting from The Addison Independent, Ball left an appointment at Counseling Services of Addison County (CSAC) in the afternoon, leaving her jacket, cell phone and water bottle behind at the office –– she was reported missing about an hour and a half later.

The Vermont State Police Search and Rescue Team joined the search efforts on Thursday morning, along with officials from the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, New England K-9 Search and Rescue, and Upper Valley Wilderness Response Team.

Officials continued searching through Saturday, April 1, making sweeps along the Wright Park area, into Weybridge, Morgan Horse Farm Road, the Otter Creek Gorge preserve and Huntington Falls. The team covered about 900 acres, or three miles of territory, over the three days, Middlebury Police Chief Tom Hanley said in a phone interview on Monday with The Campus. Efforts included both ground-based searches and the use of drones to scope out areas from the air.

As of Monday, the team had switched from broad sweep searches to searches of specific points based on any additional evidence and/or tips they receive. The police department continued to go out and search at night and early in the morning to detect any changes or anything else that might be going on, Hanley said.

"We had a large crowd here for three days and pretty much leaving no stone unturned for a large area and she was not recovered," he added.

Teams of volunteers were also searching for Ball daily from about 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. from the Middlebury Area Land Trust's (MALT) Belden Falls hiking trail entrance in New Haven.

Members of the Middlebury Union High School community and town residents held a vigil for Ball Sunday evening in Triangle Park in downtown Middlebury. Over 200 people showed up to show their concern and support, The Addison Independent reported.

Members of the Facebook page in memory of Ball's life created a GoFundMe page for her funeral and the service costs associated with it.

"In her short time with us on earth, Rebecca had such a profound impact on those around her, something those who were fortunate enough to bond with her will be forever grateful for. It is our job to return the gesture, in her honor," the page reads.

Students consider local summer storage options

By BEN WAGNER
Staff Writer

As the end of the spring semester nears, many students are beginning to think about how and where to store their belongings for the summer. While some items will be left behind or sorted into recycling bins, many students will load their belongings up into cars and haul them home for the summer months. But for students who fly home, take the train or otherwise don't have the ability to transport the contents of their rooms, suites or small houses, the process of finding available and affordable summer storage options can be time consuming.

Middlebury currently requires students to move all of their belongings out of their dorms at the end of the spring term. While the college itself does not offer on-campus storage for students, the student-run company Middlebury Campus Storage (MCS) picks up students' items at the end of the spring term, stores them in an off-campus facility for the summer months, and drops them back off on campus at the start of the fall term. MCS employs a unique system in which students pay for storage on a per item basis.

"This ensures that customers only pay for what they need and has turned out to be a great storage solution for many students," Tyler Little '23, who is in charge of MCS's on-campus organization and execution, wrote in an email to The Campus.

MCS was founded 20 years ago by Middlebury students. In the spring of 2022, when Little was the company's CEO, it was acquired by Greenbox Storage, a company initially founded by students at Dartmouth College. Greenbox now manages storage at 19 colleges and universities around the country. It partners with entrepreneurial students such as Little, who are known as "Campus Co-Founders."

According to Little, MCS had a relationship with Greenbox for several years before deciding to officially join the Greenbox family last year.

"Greenbox has helped us streamline many of our back-end operations," Little wrote of the changes made to MCS upon acquisition by Greenbox.

MCS partners with a local large-scale storage and shipping company that transports student items to an off-site warehouse to store them.

"[MCS is] pretty easy but kinda expensive," Alex Scott-Hansen '25 told The Campus of the service.

It currently costs $15 to reserve space on MCS's website, while storage prices range from $15/month for a backpack-sized piece of luggage to $45/month to store a futon. The summer storage term for Middlebury is four months, per the company's website.

Vikram Vasan '25, who used MCS last summer, said he does not plan on using the service again this year. "The price went up and it is probably just easier to ask a friend who drives to campus if they can bring a bag to their house and store it for me over the summer," Vasan said.

Other students may choose to use independent private storage options in the area. However, since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, those units have been short in supply in Vermont, according to reporting from WCAX 3.

"There was a mad rush to find off-campus storage when the pandemic hit Vermont, and [the facility I use] was one of the few with spare units," Blaise Siefer '23.5, who rents a space at Smart Move Storage with a few friends, told The Campus.

Courtesy Photo

Smart Move storage in Middlebury, one of the self-storage options students use.

Siefer and his friends rent the space year-round. Siefer cited the sheer number of things they have to store relative to the average dorm room size and fears of losing the space as reasons for their continuous rental.

"We're scared of giving up the space — we understand that competition for storage units is steep and we wouldn't want to jeopardize losing out on a unit that has worked really well for us," Siefer wrote.

Siefer added that even finding an initial storage space was no easy task, requiring a lot of phone calls and emails, but worth it in the end.

Overall, according to Little, students are increasingly using MCS, which he said he attributes to their item-based pricing model. "We've seen a huge resurgence in student use of MCS post-Covid," Little told The Campus.

MCS uses many student employees to accomplish the labor-intensive collection and distribution processes at the beginning and end of each year.

"Picking up and dropping off all of the items stored with us is a very demanding process, and we couldn't be more grateful for all of our student employees that help make this happen," Little wrote.

Although MCS is a private, student-run company, it does have a professional relationship with the college administration. "The last few days of the semester tend to be a very busy time for many college departments like Facilities Services and Public Safety, so we always orchestrate with them to ensure we aren't disrupting any of their year-end activities like Commencement preparation," Little added.

"It was a pain to find storage space, but we're so glad we did," Siefer said, reflecting the sentiments of many students, hard at work searching for summer storage.

Insufficient care for club sports

Op-Ed

Sophia Immorlica *is a member of the class of 2024*

COURTESY PHOTO

Middlebury Women's Water Polo on an offensive run during the 2022 Division Championship.

During my sophomore season on the water polo team at Middlebury, I sustained a concussion that would permanently alter several different aspects of my life and overall well-being.

In this moment of despair and confusion, I was ushered to the athletic training room because of the severity of the incident. Luckily for me, at this point, I was also a member of the rugby team which had its own trainer. Therefore, I was able to receive immediate medical attention for what ended up being one of the most serious injuries of my life.

ut most club sport athletes at Middlebury do not have access to immediate medical care like I did. Why is this the case at an institution that has more than enough resources to be able to provide this type of care for all of its student athletes, regardless of the level they play at?

Although I was lucky to have been a part of another program that has a trainer, my teammates in the water polo organization and other individuals who partake in club sports without trainers would not have been as lucky. Now that I no longer play rugby, I have found myself in the same boat as my water polo teammates. Over the course of the last three years, I have watched as countless water polo players have been unable to access the immediate medical care that is often needed for injuries or incidents that are sustained playing full-contact sports. Besides rugby, crew is the only other sport that has an athletic trainer. Although rugby may be a full-contact sport, and crew athletes are at risk of overuse injuries, water polo players are at just as much of an elevated risk of injury due to the nature of our sport. If you have ever witnessed a water polo match, I am almost certain that you, too, would be questioning the lack of consideration and judgment going into the decision of denying my team and various others necessary medical assistance.

Throughout my three years at Middlebury, I have witnessed teammates experience a wide variety of injuries. Shoulder dislocations, broken fingers and concussions are all commonplace in water polo. Not only do these injuries affect our ability to play, but they also inhibit our daily lives. This is not a sustainable system: I have watched teammates and friends simply ignore substantial injuries because they do not have the means to seek medical attention off campus. Students are required to find not only transport to receive off campus care, but are required to then pay for their own medical expenses and physical therapy if an injury warrants because what should be basic resources are not provided to us.

As a member of an athletic team and organization, there are a few resources and systems in place to ensure that we are able to compete and play in a safe and equitable environment. The school provides us with funding when needed to help subsidize costs of competition and travel, we are required to fill out liability and safety forms when our seasons start, we have school liaisons with whom we can work to have a functional program, and a host of other small resources like this are allotted to us. Despite these existing resources, however, we are being denied basic care and concern by those who oversee our programs. When the club sports office and the administration deny us access to a designated trainer , it is almost as if those in charge of allotting these resources at our institution are saying that our health is secondary to that of other athletes. If we are all paying tuition at Middlebury, it makes no sense to not have existing resources available to all students who need them.

Not only is not having a trainer outright dangerous to the health of our athletes, it also creates barriers for involvement, even when we seek to promote an environment in which anyone who wants to participate can participate. By forcing members of most club sports to seek medical attention off campus, we are also forcing underprivileged and underrepresented students to risk taking on a financial burden that would otherwise be completely out of sight and out of mind. It is completely unfair and unacceptable for students to take on the risk of injury inherent in contact sports without the reassurance that they will receive immediate medical aid if needed.

Why is it that something that is seemingly common sense at other institutions is not taking place in most of the Middlebury club sports world? When other schools from our division come to Middlebury to play, their coaches and players alike are shocked by our lack of medical personnel and medical resources. In fact, by not allowing us access to a trainer, we are disobeying the rules of our league that necessitate medical personal to be on scene at all competitions. On the flip side, when we go to other peer institutions for competitions, they provide resources for their athletes that we would never be able to dream of — first and foremost, trainers for club sport athletes. By not having access to an athletic trainer, countless club sports athletes at Middlebury are losing out on necessary and imperative medical care and are forced to jeopardize their own well-being because the institution they are representing does not believe that it is necessary. I have asked myself time and time again over the past three years, do we just not matter as much as other members of our college community?

The Capybara Craze: Why are they everywhere?

Notes from the Desk

William Reed *is a layout editor and a member of the class of 2023.5.*

Have you been captivated by the recent influx of videos featuring capybaras and their peculiar habits on your Instagram and TikTok feeds? Some may think the capybara craze is a fad that faded away in middle school, or perhaps you're unfamiliar with capybaras altogether. Admittedly, they're not for everyone. But as we know, social media caters to individual preferences. And wow, does Instagram get me. During a stressful week, I find comfort in videos of capybaras lounging in a human-sized bathtub or a baby capybara riding on its mother's back. These rodents, indigenous to South America, have won over many admirers with their endearing (albeit very odd) appearance and peculiar temperaments. You might be thinking, "That's so strange, weird and annoying of Will Reed to like them so much!" No, I like to think it's not. From balancing oranges on their heads to jumping into lakes in a single file line, capybaras have become an unexpected source of incredible joy for many of us.

I'm not the only one who thinks this way. Fellow Campus editor Bella Burke said, "I think TikTok gave capybaras a platform to start receiving the love they deserve. They went viral for good reason: they're awesome."

Two years ago, Vice reported that "Videos containing the hashtag 'capybara' have garnered over 116 million views on TikTok. On Instagram, capybara appreciation accounts — many created within the past year — are rapidly gaining popularity."

You may be wondering: why are people so drawn to them? What makes them so viewable? For me, the short answer is this: they're the cutest things ever. Not only is their physique squishy and adorable, their personalities are — at least from what I've gathered from videos and memes — dog-like, personable and playful.

Kate Sadoff, another Campus editor, has a bit of a different relationship with capybaras than Burke. She said to me, "You DM me capybara videos. And yes, I admittedly enjoy them." Though she doesn't stumble upon them by her own grace, Sadoff gets it: they're the most perfect creature.

Of course, there are those who might argue that the capybara craze is just another example of how easily young people are distracted by trivial trends on social media. But I would argue that it's squarely these small moments of joy and wonder that make life worth living. Whether we're watching capybaras leap into water or simply taking a moment to appreciate the beauty of the natural world, these moments both connect us to something bigger, cuter, and more simpler than ourselves all the while grounding us in the comfort that these little square screens so disturbingly bring us. Big, small, cute and wondrous — capybaras do it all.

I'll leave you with a reference I would be remiss to omit. As Westley famously said in "The Princess Bride," "Rodents oOf uUnusual sSize? I don't think they exist." And yet, here we are, captivated by the largest of all the rodents and the bliss they bring us. Perhaps this serves as a reminder that sometimes, the most unexpected things can bring us the greatest happiness, and for me (and now, hopefully for you too), capybaras are that reminder.

SKILES ROBERTS-SALVADOR

LOTS OF PEOPLE GET PERIODS

Notes from the Desk

Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri *is an opinions editor and a member of the class of 2024*

I have fond childhood memories of sitting criss-cross apple-sauce with my three younger siblings, listening and giggling as my father read us the storybook "Everybody Poops." For families with little kids, this is often a staple of their repertoire of nighttime stories, and one that I've enjoyed seeing passed on to younger cousins. Not only does it elicit infectious giggles from little kids, but it also provides a positive outlet to teach them about their bodies.

However, it makes me wonder, why is it socially acceptable to teach children about this completely normal, healthy bodily process, but it remains completely taboo to even utter the word "menstruation" in public?

Why isn't the title "Lots of People Get Periods" read at bedtime, and what makes the topic so heinous that we cannot possibly fathom teaching kids about it when they're young?

There is a highly gendered stigma surrounding menstruation, leading to half the population being left wholly unaware of a critical aspect of the other half's health. And, there even remains a stigma around the discussion of the topic among the half of the population it directly impacts. Teaching about menstruation in a way that articulates its normalcy would help minimize the embarrassment and discomfort many face at older ages.

As adults, it's our responsibility to dismantle this stigma for the next generation so that they can experience the benefits of a more accepting and aware society. From understanding our bodies, to diagnosing medical conditions or addressing deep-seated societal inequities, it would make half the population's lives much simpler. It sure would've made mine.

I first experienced the societal stigma surrounding menstruation in seventh grade. Fretting about how to best conceal my period products in my backpack, I was constantly worried that somebody would notice what I was grabbing before excusing myself to the restroom.

Instead of this embarrassment being quenched, this was the beginning of a litany of experiences that ingrained in my mind that menstruation is something that must be concealed at all costs.

And so I began to inherit the age-old wisdom of the generations that came before me: I learned one of the more practical purposes of a purse, how to best perform the backpack-to-pocket transfer and remained acutely aware of whether or not I was wearing pants with pockets on the days my period persisted.

I don't blame the generations that came before me for passing on these traditions of concealment; they were merely messengers of what they were taught by the generations before them: society's disdain for all things female. This acceptance makes it even more crucial that we consciously work to break this stigma.

The notion that my period was something that nobody else must find out about impacted me much more significantly as I entered eighth grade. That year, I began coming off the soccer field with cramps that made me want to double over in pain. I would hobble off to the bench, trying everything in my power to keep myself upright so as not to arouse suspicion. But how relieving it would've been to curl up into a ball right then and there. Despite the pain, I couldn't bring myself to say a word to my male coaches. Sometimes I told them I was lightheaded, making them far more concerned than was necessary.

Once, during a midmorning game, the sun was beginning to inflict blistering heat. As I was sprinting up the sideline after a ball, I felt the first pang in my abdomen. Knowing that this would be my final full-speed run of the day, I pushed myself as hard as I could, making the pain worse in the process.

Through trial and error I learned how much pain I could bear while continuing to play, and as a result, and learned breaking points. This meant that once a month, my playing would abruptly get much worse. I would look slower, lazier and like I wasn't even trying.

I was well aware of this, and it was infuriating. During these weeks, I was more harshly scrutinized by coaches and it impacted my playing times and the positions at which coaches placed me on the field. I knew that after each week, I would have to prove myself all over again. Still, not once did it cross my mind to explain to them the cause of my sub-par performance.

I knew it wasn't just in my head either. It was in the middle of this very midmorning game that a mom from the sideline shouted onto the field in frustration "Sophia, if you're hurt, ask for a sub!" Her snippy tone made it clear to me that she was not concerned about my well-being but rather the team's success. She just wanted me off the field.

Reflecting on this experience not only made me consider how archaic our societal views of menstruation are but also how lucky I am. Tucked away in my bag on the sideline were period products, Tylenol, Advil and a snack to fill my stomach before taking them. I am so fortunate to have had and still have access to all of these resources and can't imagine what the experience is for the extraordinary number of women and people who menstruate who don't have access to them.

During the month of March, the Feminist and Gender Resource Center, SGA DEI Committee and SPECS, have all worked together to bring attention to the stark inequities in menstruation health care, which are known as period poverty. During The Period Forum, we addressed the fact that period poverty can prevent people from attending school or work and can also impact the reproductive health of those affected.

In order to further bring awareness to these issues, Middlebury's Feminist and Gender Resource Center at Chellis House will host feminist, activist, artist and creative strategist Treasure Brooks on April 20 at 4:30 p.m. in Hillcrest to discuss her own activist initiatives to address period poverty.

During a small period storytelling event, we brought together a group of people on campus to address the stigma and discomfort that can accompany discussions surrounding menstruation, even among the communities it most directly affects.

And if you're still not convinced that this stigma exists, consider this. Although very clearly a necessity, to this day period products get labeled a luxury good. Grouped with items like jewelry, makeup and toys when it comes to taxes, this categorization reduces their importance to that of frivolities, and largely undermines a serious aspect of healthcare for women and people who menstruate. Additionally, guaranteed period products for school-age students is a requirement in only 15 U.S. states. If this abysmally low number wasn't already troubling enough, the guarantee only extends the length of the school day and academic calendar. What happens after school? What about weekends? What about summers?

Educating ourselves about these issues is critical to doing better for younger generations. And we simply must do better for younger generations. Reconceptualizing the way we discuss and address menstruation begins by educating ourselves. It's just another thing that happens in life, and eradicating this stigma is critical to the mental and physical health of all women and people who menstruate. The way we think about menstruation needs to change, from the way we teach young people to the way we hide personal hygiene products when we walk into the bathroom, or to the way we handle not feeling well while menstruating. It's time we start owning our periods.

Abigail Chang/The Middlebury Campus

Middlebury's Feminist and Gender Resource Center at Chellis House.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email

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with submissions.

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MASKS AND MANNERISMS: EXPLORING THE PITFALLS OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Op-Ed

***Cheryl Liu** is a member of the class of 2024*

Recently, I have found myself becoming overly-invested in the satirical nature of Gwyneth Paltrow's court hearing. Some of the many highlights include Paltrow pouting on the stand about how she lost half a day of skiing or how the opposition — an orthopedic surgeon — who cannot attend his wine tastings anymore. The media is, rather accurately, representing this unfolding charade as humorous because of how out-of-touch these people and their problems seem. This unfolding class dynamic reminds me of a personal reckoning that I recently encountered.

I was eating dinner with a Middlebury friend and two other friends at a restaurant where the menu was classified by appetizers, entrées, desserts and a bottle of wine to accompany the experience. When we had finished our appetizers and were waiting for the waiter to bring out the second course, my instincts kicked in the midst of our idle conversation. I began stacking our empty plates in preparation for the waiter to take them away, an action which rendered my dinner company aghast. Unbeknownst to me, I had committed a social faux-pas. They informed me that you don't stack plates in such restaurants because it's "the waiter's job."

As someone who grew up lower-class and is a first-generation college student, this was a glimpse into a way of life I had never encountered until I arrived here at Middlebury; a way of life dictated by an unspoken agreement of etiquette and manners. To me, a napkin represents utility. In my friends' world, a napkin is a signifier of respect, something that belongs on their laps throughout the duration of a meal. In this world, it is customary to make reservations for a meal, no matter how casual. Their rules dictate that you order a bottle of wine for the table at the start of the meal; that the wait staff make a grand gesture of decanting it in front of you; that your utensils stay in your hands until you are finished and a criss-cross knife and fork placement angling 90 degrees on a plate tells the waiter "I'm done... you can take this away from me now." These customs and mannerisms delineate the haves and have-nots; collectively they solidify the in-group mentality of the elite and, more importantly, identifies and excludes outsiders.

I have always valued authenticity as a personal attribute both within myself and the people that I surround myself with, but I have learned that such an attribute isn't necessarily sustainable if I want to "make it" in such a society. To climb the ladder we all need to make sacrifices, and I am in the process of making mine.

In classes, I have noticed how some of my classmates' demeanors change in different environments and contexts. One moment they will be speaking with their friends and as soon as the class starts, they are completely different people. It is as if they have put on a mask, altering everything from their persona to their mannerisms to how they carry themselves. At one point, I looked at their shape-shifting as an uncanny ability, filling me with awe and bewilderment. Now, I see myself mirroring this behavior.

Skiles Roberts-Salvador

I am a junior, so I am more than halfway through my journey at Middlebury, but this incident at the restaurant made me contemplate my time here. Coming to Middlebury, I expected to sit in lectures and write essays about the ideas of Hume and Locke while replicating their esoteric jargon. However, I did not expect to become one of them — the elite. For the longest time I yearned to be where I am now. For the opportunity to exchange ideas with incredibly ambitious, intelligent, and curious people on a daily basis. To become fully integrated with the Gwyneth Paltrows of the world. For them to accept me. Recently, however, my unease with this lifestyle has left me with a peculiarly queasy feeling, something that feels a lot like guilt.

Maybe this transition between my past and present has been too seamless. I feel as if I have lost, or am in the process of losing some of my core attributes, qualities that made me who I am and allowed me to pave the path that led me to Midd. I am grasping at the little things that remind me of my lower-class upbringing. Clinging to the things that tie me to my roots, that remind me of how I was raised and who I grew up around. So, no, I will continue to stack the plates at restaurants, even if it is "the waiter's job;" I won't feel obliged to put the napkin on my lap; and I certainly will not be caught seasoning a glass of wine, a skeptical that entails lightly swirling it four times counterclockwise, prior to drinking it.

Beyond that, I want to acknowledge how appreciative I am for all of the opportunities that Middlebury presents for people like me. Middlebury has helped me in my attempts to integrate into a seemingly exclusive society. To me, this place is the epitome of American meritocracy. It is probably true that I can learn about the various metaphysical theories of consciousness from a philosophy textbook written in the 17th century. I don't think that there are many other places where I'd get to mingle with those who embody the mannerisms of high society. Such as the experience of attending a dinner at a fancy restaurant, I enjoy the insight of knowing that this way of life exists, but living life constrained by these rituals and mannerisms is suffocating. Which is why I would prefer to keep these cultural spheres separate.

A love letter to Proc Basement

Notes from the Desk

***Lily Laesch** is a member of the class of 2023 and the Campus's Editorial Director and Senior Opinions Editor. She is the secretary of RIDDIM World Dance Troupe.*

For my first seven semesters at Middlebury, there existed a beloved, clandestine spot tucked into the ground floor on Proctor Dining Hall. Affectionately known as "Proc Basement," this space provided a haven for dancers across campus to hold formal rehearsals or casually work on choreography. The only other studio spaces on campus with a full mirror — the Mahaney dance studios and the boxing gym in the athletic center — exist on the margins of campus. (The availability of those spaces is also fickle; the former is prioritized for the Dance Department and the latter is often utilized for PE classes.) Proc Basement, however, was a centrally located and communal space that provided a creative outlet for anyone who sought it out.

That is, until now.

At the end of the fall semester, Proc Basement as we knew it was shuttered for good. The door was locked, the mirrors were covered and a sign reading "Reserved for Testing" went up. As far as I know, no student groups were asked about this or given a chance to voice the importance and sanctity of this space. Out of all the rooms on campus that could have been employed and designed for exam-taking, this was a space that was seen as inoperative and disposable. But every dancer on campus will tell you that Proc Basement was far from that.

Though we may have complained incessantly about the dusty floors that made floorwork unsavory or the giant pole in the middle of the room that many limbs narrowly missed crashing into, this was still a place that was characterized by a profound appreciation for dance and for each other. On any given evening, the sounds of a booming speaker, voices of choreographers counting out music or tap shoes ricocheting across the floor echoed throughout the building.

Now, for student groups such as Evolution Dance Crew, Midd Masti, On Tap and RIDDIM World Dance Troupe, the already-difficult task of finding available rehearsal spaces has been exacerbated. For example, many dancers in RIDDIM will have up to 20 hours of rehearsal in a given week. And though this time commitment rivals that of varsity sports teams, it's hard to imagine any athletic practice facilities being repurposed for testing.

Dance groups on campus have consistently been negotiating for more studio spaces to be made available; Evolution Dance Crew recently received mirrors for their Forest Basement rehearsals, which they have lobbied in favor of for years. Though this change made it seem like Middlebury was beginning to take the dance community more seriously, the closure of Proc Basement nullified this hope.

Ultimately, the consideration of Proc Basement as an unused space ripe for reappropriation implies that dancers are expendable and less valued than other groups on campus. It also undercuts the hours of work that have gone into providing many sold-out shows, workshops, and showcases for the campus community — which Proc Basement helped make possible.

As a result, we ask that other rooms on campus be utilized for testing so that Proc Basement can be made an open and communal studio space again. And as plans for a new student center in Proctor emerge, we hope that the needs of arts groups and performance-based organizations will be valued and prioritized.

Abigail Chang/The Middlebury Campus

"Proc Basement" on the ground floor of Proctor Dining Hall.

"ROSPO": ON THE ASSUMPTION OF RATS AND THEATER AS IT APPLIES TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

By ELIZA KING FREEDMAN
Senior Arts & Culture Edito

Courtesy Photo

Actors were offered an unusual level of agency in developing their characters.

The sold out show "ROSPO," meaning toad in Italian and named for the toad metaphor around which the play revolves, took the stage of Hepburn Zoo during April Fools' weekend as the first ever play and brainchild of writer and director Joey Disorbo '25.5. The programs that waited on each audience-member's seat offered a glimpse into the year of preparation that has gone into this play — from the writing, to the audition process, to the plethora of toad stickers that have been spread around campus. Many student-run productions that exist outside of the Department of Theatre tend to be improv-adjacent or somewhat haphazard in their preparation, but this play was both introspective and staggeringly detailed. And while Theater majors are asked to focus on one element of play making for their senior work, Disorbo, a sophomore, did it all himself.

The play opens to the characters of Tony and John (who remain nameless until the final 20 minutes of the play), a layperson and priest respectively who have recently been shipwrecked on a journey from Brazil. With direct references to "Life of Pi" and "Emma," and various looser allusions to other famous characters and books, the play starts off as what feels like a predictable story of two unalike companions finding friendship in a journey home. However, "ROSPO" claims its own identity entirely through a variety of trials which face Tony and John, largely culminating in the deification of a rat named Margaret (an event which is narrated by God, played by August Siegel '25).

The arguable climax of the play comes after Margaret has been trapped and named by the two castaways, and she is suddenly assumed into heaven, floating up above Tony and John and asking each of them to question whatever they knew of religion before. While Tony — played by Alex Halaby '25 with a successfully self-deprecating attitude that makes his story-arc all the more enjoyable but all the less believable — finds God, John — former priest played by Peter McClearn '25 with a level of somberness that feels applicable — loses his faith.

The play ends with Tony entering the very seminary that John has left, and with John encountering both Tony's ex-wife Brenda (Curran Amster '26) and God on the very same bus-stop bench. It is here wherein the toad metaphor enters the plot, with Brenda offering John an ominous piece of advice to take with him on his journey. "Not even the dirtiest, foulest toad is irredeemable in the eyes of the truly righteous," she declares.

As for where such a metaphor comes from, Disorbo remains elusive. "Nobody believes me when I tell them that it's not nearly as deep as they think. It really was a decision rooted in intuition. Although, there are reasons that I chose the toad specifically, none of which I will ever disclose," said Disorbo.

"ROSPO" ends after a final conversation between God and John, wherein God explains to a distraught John that the only thing that differentiates humans from God's other creatures is choice. "So choose," says God, and the stage lights fade before the audience learns if John has the courage to do so.

"The play ends before he makes his decision because I never found out what he decided to do," explains Disorbo.

As for the actors themselves, they were offered an unusual level of agency in developing their characters and dictating their perception.

"Joey helped us work through how we wanted lines to sound, how we wanted to shape our characters, what we wanted to change and what felt best for us. It was totally collaborative, which was very fun," said Sam Marquis '25, who played a priest.

In terms of the process, the actors had nothing but praise for their director. "Joey knew what was best all along, but sometimes during rehearsal we would discover something for a character that was better for the show, and Joey would roll with it. I certainly participated in developing my character more than in any other production I've been involved in," reflected Josh Harkins '25, who played a higher priest in the seminary to which Marquis and the two main characters belonged.

It is clear that Disorbo's lack of experience with playwriting and playmaking did not hold him back — it almost seems to have resulted in being more committed to the product. "'ROSPO' was not the product of any creative writing habit. What happened was that I had decided in April of 2022 that I was going to write and produce a play for the Hepburn Zoo. I had no idea what it was going to be about — I just knew I was going to do it. To put it succinctly, the play didn't emerge from writing habits; writing habits emerged from the need to put on a play," explained Disorbo.

"I don't necessarily aspire to write plays, and many of our actors don't necessarily aspire to be actors. It is rather simple, really: we are in it for fun. There's nothing better to be in it for."

FROM THE ARCHIVES: SPRINGTIME AT THE COLLEGE

By SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI
Opinions Editor

"From the Archives" is an opportunity for various writers to visit the Middlebury Special Collections and write about a different artifact each week. The Special Collections boasts over 10,000 historic items, and through this column we encourage writers to explore not only the college's history, but also the history of the world around us.

Middlebury students have changed in many ways since 1961, but if there's one thing we share with our predecessors, it's a craving for warm, summery days.

Considering the vastly different experiences of past Middlebury students, it is surprising to come across photos taken during summer language schools in 1961 that depicted eerily similar habits to those of today's student body.

The black and white photographs show students studying, talking and hanging out in Adirondack chairs on the very lawns we do when the weather allows.

This photograph showing two students of Middlebury's Spanish Language School reading, one in braille, was taken by the Middlebury College News Bureau, the Institution's official news office. During the same summer, the Bureau took many similar photos of students in other Language School Programs. Below are photos from the French and Italian Language Schools.

Although the first and the third photographs depict scenes of scholarly pursuit, the second depicts another distinctly important feature of socialization at Middlebury: spending leisure time outdoors. Once the weather warms, it's not uncommon to see students sprawled out on blankets, sprinkling the deep green lawn below the Chapel.

Throughout the chilly Vermont winter, we yearn for the days of closing our eyes, reading and talking, enveloped in rays of sunshine. It's hard not to believe the students in these images must have felt the same way.

The selected photos are merely a few amongst many taken during the summer of 1961 that show students working, discussing and relaxing outdoors. They reveal a tried and true way Middlebury students have always utilized the outdoors to make academic work more enjoyable, and an institutional habit to occupy the greenery that engulfs the buildings littered across campus.

The photographs make it evident that the massive lawns and easy access to outdoor spaces facilitate an outdoor-centered culture — one which permeates campus even today. The similarities between the habits of Middlebury students 60 years ago and the current student body emphasize the importance for the College and its administration to listen to the students when they ask for what they need. Such a reckoning came about during the Covid-19 pandemic, when students' ability to flock to the campus's lawns and greenery became crucial to their mental wellbeing, and when the administration not only noticed this necessity but took action in providing spaces for students to relax.

As we navigate the trials and tribulations of the modern era, students can derive some comfort from the idea that some good things will hopefully never change.

Courtesy of Middlebury Special Collections

A NIGHT AT THE MOVIES, AT THE SYMPHONY

By JOSHUA GLUCKSMAN
Staff Writer

What do a dairy farm, film photography about caregiving, a paper animation about German folk tales, Mayan rituals, prison, shopping carts and balloons have in common? Absolutely nothing. And yet, such were the subjects of the six short films, each made to be performed with a live accompaniment, that were shown on Friday night at Robison Hall with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, as part of the event "A Night at the Movies." Dozens of students, community members, faculty and even some of the producers and directors of the films themselves piled into the auditorium. The ensemble appeared serene as conductor Matt LaRocca took the stage and began to introduce the night's event.

LaRocca's passion for the performance was quickly made clear. For him, incorporating live orchestra into cinema is an opportunity to connect with visual art in a profound way. Furthermore, these movies, unlike silent films or Golden Age Hollywood flicks, felt much more personal for LaRocca because they are all shorts that premiered at the Middlebury New Filmmakers Festivals throughout the past six years.

The first film, "Estrellita" is a tragic but beautiful animation about a young daughter losing her father, a dairy farmer, to detention by border police. The animation, created by director of the Middlebury Animation Studio Daniel Houghton, was set in a magical Vermont setting — complete with snow-covered fields and cows to match. The film began with characters flying around the screen in a fantasy state, a scene that appeared again toward the end in a dream sequence between the daughter and father. The scenes that were happy and accompanied by a gentle orchestral arrangement starkly contrasted the louder and faster melodies which accompanied the darker visuals of the short. The film resonated with Ryan Smith '25, a Vermonter who plays for the student orchestra and is interested in agriculture and food studies. "I really appreciated the way the imagined view of what the world looked like fades away as border patrol comes, and the reality of farm life comes into view. What often looks so beautiful about Vermont is covered by a layer of pain right down below it," Smith said.

Not all the films were as somber. One of the most unique and perhaps most tame was a paper-cut animated short entitled "& Gretel Hansel Kinrumpelstilts," directed by Chris Caswell, which, as the name suggests, is a mashup of two iconic tales told out of order. The medium was particularly striking, with subtle movements in the little paper images that were perfectly followed by the sound of the instruments. Liza Grebenkina '25 especially appreciated how the reordering of the fairy tales offered the audience the simultaneous feelings of familiarity and foreignness. "It allowed the viewers to follow the images associated with the stories through emotion, and not chronology," Grebenkina said.

LaRocca joked at the end of the sixth film that the next and last one was a family favorite, in that it was a light-hearted, animated love story, perfect for kids and adults alike. Director Mark Smith's "Two Balloons" is a love story between two lemurs traveling the skies. The trip is demarcated visually and sonically in three parts: pre-storm, storm, and post-storm, as the two love interests get tragically close to each other's hot air balloons before tragic weather hits. The pre-storm proves comic, with the audience clearly amused by the personification of the lemurs. The storm proves shocking, as thunder tubes made realistic wind and thunder sounds. For Roskva Torhalsdottir '25, the opportunity to experience live music along with the movie emphasized the creative and evocative nature of music-making. "I find that it is often so easy to experience the soundtrack of a movie as a background. Seeing the musicians come together into a larger whole activated my ears in a whole different way," Torhalsdottir said.

Courtesy Photo

"A Night at the Movies" features the Vermont Symphony Orchestra.

It was the third act, the lemurs' happy ending, however, that truly moved the crowd. And the emotional connection to the films was not limited to audience members. One musician in particular, violinist Jane Kittredge, had a unique reaction that stood out from the rest: while she was smiling for much of the performance, she began to tear up at the happy resolution of the final film. This striking display of emotion is one of the ways that Kittredge finds she can connect with the audience even while playing. "Our emotions affect and influence everything we do; playing music certainly, and performing music in particular. The goal is always to convey that emotion to the audience and inspire them to feel something, as well," Kittredge said.

Ari Rudiakov, a substitute violist also reflected on the role a musician plays in the way that they display emotion in performance. "We step outside of ourselves when we play. We aren't aware of how we look, because we let the music take us wherever we go," Rudiakov said.

MIDDLEBURY UNITED WITH HOPE FOR UKRAINE

By JONATHAN EATON
Contributing Writer

A group of Middlebury Ukrainian students and members of the community presented the ReUnited for Ukraine, a continuation of the United For Ukraine beneficiary concert, featuring musical and multimedia performances at the Mahaney Arts Center on Saturday, March 31. The evening's message highlighted why Ukraine is fighting and what the country has to fight for. Audience members were also encouraged to donate to Ukrainian nonprofits to support the ongoing defense effort.

Head organizer Mariia Dzhlos '24 said when organizing this year's event she sought to continue the great legacy of Masha Makutonina '21.5 who organized the event last year after war broke out.

"If Masha found all the strength to put it all together a year ago," Dzholos said. "I had to find energy to do it all again and continue the tradition because the war goes on." Unfortunately, according to her, the situation has worsened in Ukraine.

When asked about organizing and helping to plan ReUnited for Ukraine for a second time, a year into the war, Dzholos said, "We were discussing this. We were discussing this also last year. After the war is over, we will have to organize another concert for the rebuilding of Ukraine. There was no question of whether to organize the concert or not. There was a question about what will be the message would be." Last year, the United for Ukraine concert's message was to dipsell Vladimir Putin's myth that Ukraine is a part of Russia without its own unique culture by demonstrating Ukraine's deep roots through traditional folk songs. This year the message was why Ukraine fights and why it needs the support of the world.

The concert began with Terynn Kuzma and Stephan Zaets performing a beautiful slow ballad, "Spy Moia Lastivko," with music by Viktor Morozov, a Ukrainian pop artist, and lyrics by Mar'iana Savka, on banduras. The bandura is a traditional Ukrainian folk harp whose players were persecuted for expressing Ukrainian nationalism when the Soviet Union attempted towipe out Ukrainian culture. Today, the bandura is widely played across Ukraine.

Next, Diana Herasim, an exchange student from Kherson, Ukraine at Middlebury Union High School, delivered a powerful emotional speech about her experience with the war. She spoke about her friend from boxing who was killed on the frontline fighting the Russians. Last year, Herasim gave a speech at the United for Ukraine event while her home in Kherson was occupied by the Russian forces. This year when she spoke again at the ReUnited for Ukraine event, her home city was free, liberated by brave Ukrainian forces.

Next, Chapel Hill, a Middlebury student band, performed "Oi u Luzi Chervona Kalyna" (Oh, there is a red viburnum in the meadow) an inspirational Ukrainian folk song written in 1912, and adopted by the Ukrainian National Liberation Army as their anthem in 2014. The song is about Ukrainian soldiers fighting off the enemy and has been embraced as a patriotic symbol of resistance against the Russian invasion. After the 2022 invasion the song was picked up by many mainstream artists including Pink Floyd. After the liberation of Kherson, "Oi u Luzi Chervona Kalyna" was sung in the streets along with the Ukrainian national anthem, "Shche Ne Vmerla Ukraina."

Apart from powerful emotive music, twelve student dancers performed a joyous Ukrainian folk dance, Hopak, in traditional Ukrainian outfits. The Hopak is a Cossack dance derived from the Ukrainian word Hopaty meaning "to leap or jump," and features many acrobatic leaps and cartwheels.

Apart from powerful emotive music, twelve student dancers performed a joyous Ukrainian folk dance, Hopak, in traditional Ukrainian outfits.

Courtesy photo

The evening highlighted Ukraine as a nation of courage and resilience.

The next section of the event featured a moving film created by Masha Makutonina '21.5. Her film titled "The Sinking Moment of Facing War" was full of stimulating imagery about "the before." Before a plane crashes, before Russia invades Ukraine. It suspended the audience in time questioning the future, anticipating an impact or a change.

Following the film, members of the Middlebury community Jeff Buetner and Jessica Allen relieved the tension in the room with their beautiful baritone and soprano duet called "Nadiia, Vira i Liubov" (Hope, Faith and Love), a popular Ukrainian ballad.

Rostyk Yarovyk '25 next performed a poem called "Os' Pro Tse I Rozpovim" (So I'll talk about it) written by Serhiy Zhadan, a modern poet and Ukrainian rockstar. In the poem Zhadan reflects on the last eight years of war in Ukraine. "Eastern Ukraine, the end of the second millennium, the world is brimming with fire and music and in the darkness." Later on, Dzholos read the poem "Eastern Europe is a Pit of Death and Decaying Plums" by Oksana Lutsyshyna, a Ukrainian Professor at the University of Texas Austin. The poem explored themes of death, war and sorrow, through the relationship between a man and woman.

Apart from the war and destruction in the past year, the evening highlighted Ukraine as a nation of pristine cinematography and as the proud home to many gold medal athletes. A beautiful film created by Misha Poklad '22 which compiled the 50 best Ukrainian movies into two minutes was presented, and Ksenia Lebid '26 performed the ballad "Kyiv" by Cepasa with Chapel Hill while projecting pre-war footage of a vibrant Kyiv at night on the screen behind the band. The Middlebury College Choir added to the joy, performing "Shchedryk" (Carol of the Bells) in close harmony.

The evening finished off with two more lovely ballads, "Song From a Secret Garden" and "Volia" (liberty) performed by Terynn Kuzma and Stephan Zaets on their banduras. It was an evening of joy and inspiration: A hopeful celebration of Ukraine. "It was really an honor to be able to be a part of this event. It was really wonderful to see so many people in the audience celebrating Ukrainian culture," said Roskva Torhalhalsottir '25, a dancer who performed.

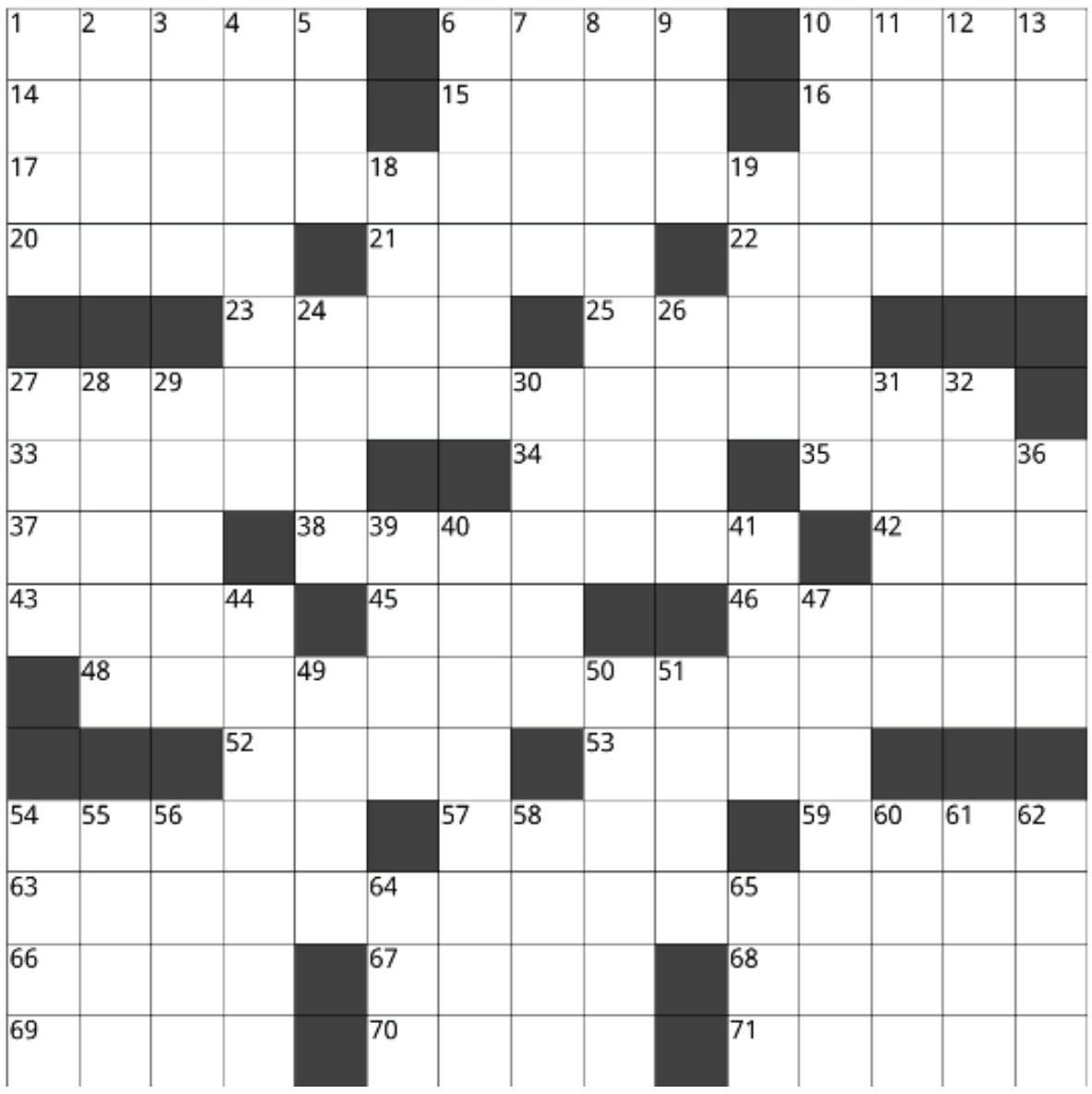
The evening united the Middlebury community with hope for Ukraine's future.

Liza Grebenkina '25 said, "I'm from Russia and I have a lot of Ukrainian friends on campus and for me it is especially important to be here to show my support for them. It is so important to remember that Ukraine is not only about the war and there is so much beauty and power in it."

The evening united the Middlebury community with hope for Ukraine's future. Even after the program had ended members of the audience were joyously singing Ukrainian folk tunes together. It was a wonderful experience. "I believe we will do it again next year and the message will not be about the war but about rebuilding and putting our effort to build back better," Dzholos said.

CROSSWORD FOR YOU!!!

By JOSH HARKINS
Puzzle Master



Across

1 Like Buddy or Legolas
6 Largest continent in the world by population
10 Identify
14 Schitt mom
15 Cal Ripken Sr. and George H. W. Bush, for two
16 Emergency departure, in first responder lingo
17 See 27-Across
20 Voice of Princess Raya, Kelly Marie
21 Horse coat pattern
22 Southern pie filling option
23 Valley where one can find taxidermist Chuck Testa
25 Black, Green, and Earl Grey
27 With 17-Across, the last few lines of Ferris Bueller's Day Off
33 How states won by Trump or Romney are shown on a map
34 Aunt, in Aragon
35 Teen advocacy group trying to prevent 42-Acrosses
37 Pressure meas.
38 Many a Mossad agent
42 Charge for blowing more than .08% on a BAC
43 Close
45 Slippery fish
46 Amenity of some chalets or lodges
48 With 63-Across, one of Joshua's most important lines in War Games
52 2501, to Nero
53 Play part, en France
54 Skipped restaurant night
57 Church recess
59 Alleviate
63 See 48-Across
66 Woman in Wolfsburg
67 Tip-top
68 Symbol of authority
69 Cyclists Peter Kennaugh and Mark Cavendish, for two
70 Jazzes (up)
71 Falco and Sedgwick, for two

Down

1 Give off
2 Tolkien canon, abbr.
3 Court responsible for terrorism and espionage-related warrants
4 Ingredient in many a Minecraft recipe
5 Vehicle map option, for short
6 Skillful, in English or French
7 Viking tale
8 "Only the truth from me"
9 Remains of a fire
10 Joker and the Riddler, to Batman
11 With, in France
12 Trump slogan that now stands for extremism
13 Subject for many a buss. major
18 Periods of history
19 Fish that, when one letter is added, becomes a beloved talk show host
24 Lightsaber wielder
26 Airline headquartered in Tel Aviv
27 Condition golfers try to avoid, sometimes known as "the twisties" in gymnastics
28 Get-go
29 Dickensian Heep
30 Country represented by Måneskin in Eurovision 2021
31 Bones involved in many a broken arm
32 Astronomer Hubble
36 Bell sound
39 Mail
40 Dependence
41 "___ It a Pity," a George Harrison ballad
44 (The best) former Penguin, Mario
47 Common piece of volleyball equipment
49 Prefix with -present
50 Squanders
51 Rapper behind album O.G. Original Gangster
54 Radio toggle option
55 When tripled, movie about Pearl Harbor nominated for 5 Oscars
56 ___ Rachel Wood
58 Magnificence
60 German grocery chain
61 Wise herb
62 Looks longingly
64 Tire
65 Award for a knight or a dame

TAUT

By EMILY THOMPSON
Contributing Writer

at 22, i am caught
between make-believe and my
new beliefs because
playing with the dog is easier
than dressing me in a pre-
pubescent silhouette.
for both of us

sometimes, i invite her in
hide my shock at the desert cracks above
her brow and the silver
in her soft baby hair
i pull her a seat up at the table
her flesh spills over the sides of the chair until
it doesn't
and she is the sole string of a violin
brakes screaming on the commuter line
we hoot and holler at her as if
we could possibly out-scream her
and then she is a weeping puddle of
blubber and i am a swallowed stone of guilt
pulled back against the leather strap
taut

sometimes, i don't
and silence is a howling barricade
at our front door

my heart is dressed in a
school girl's uniform
and peace

my pyrrhic anthem

WEEKEND RECAP: HOW DID THE PANTHERS DO THIS PAST WEEKEND?

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

Courtesy of Will Costello

Sarah Ellinghaus ’24 scored twice in the women’s lacrosse’s 13–6 win over Hamilton.

For the majority of Middlebury’s spring sports teams, the seasons are going well. Most of the teams are shifting away from the out of conference portions of their schedules and beginning to play crucial games against their NESCAC rivals. This past weekend, Middlebury played a number of highly contested matches against regional foes.

Baseball (10–4):

The baseball team traveled south this weekend to play Bowdoin (8–5) at Monan Park in Boston, a neutral location. Despite the warmer weather in Boston, Middlebury’s bats turned out to be cold in their doubleheader. In the first game, the team only scored one run courtesy of an RBI base hit by John Collins ’24, but that run was enough to defeat Bowdoin 1–0. Alex Price ’23 threw a complete game shutout and struck out 11 Bowdoin Polar Bears to lead the Panthers to victory and improve his personal win-loss record to 3–0. In the second game, there was almost no offense from the Panthers as Bowdoin held Middlebury scoreless, winning 4–0.

Softball (10–5):

The softball team also played Bowdoin (10–11) this past weekend in a doubleheader against the Polar Bears on Sunday. In the first game, the team won 3–2, propelled by impressive pitching by Samantha Hausman ’25. Hausman pitched five innings out of the bullpen, allowing only three hits and one run. The game was tied 1–1 until the fifth inning when Middlebury scored two runs to take the lead for good. In the second game of the doubleheader, Middlebury did not fare as well at all, ultimately losing 9–1. The team struggled on defense, making four errors in only just innings of play.

Women’s Lacrosse (10–0):

The #1 ranked women’s lacrosse team continued their dominant season with a 13–6 win over Hamilton (4–6). Hope Shue ’25, Sara Ellinghaus ’24, Jane Earley ’23, Caroline Messer ’26 and Maggie Coughlin ’25 each had a pair of goals in the game. Earley added to her impressive total of 80 goals scored already this season. That total leads the NESCAC by a significant margin; the next highest total is 11 goals. Earley has been impressive this year, but a dominant, well-rounded and deep roster is the reason why the women’s lacrosse team has been so successful thus far this season.

Men’s Lacrosse (7–1):

The men’s lacrosse team lost 19–15 to #2 Tufts (9–0) this past Saturday. This was the team’s first loss of the season, and Tufts was one of the toughest opponents the team has played so far this year. The team showed resilience and toughness in spite of their loss — Tufts took a 14–4 lead in the first half of the game, but a late scoring rally from the Panthers allowed them to make the game competitive at 19–15. However, there was not enough time for Middlebury to surpass Tufts. William Ryan ’23 scored four goals, and Will Zink ’23 scored three in the game.

Men’s Tennis (8–2):

The #5 men’s tennis team dominated Connecticut College (4–6) this past Saturday, beating them 9–0. The team collectively dropped just one set the entire day, and Robby Ward ’23 only dropped two games during his match. The team has been on fire lately, winning their past four contests. The team also continued their historical dominance against Connecticut College — in the 12 matchups in men’s tennis between the two schools, Middlebury has won all of them.

Women’s Tennis (8–1):

The #6 women’s tennis team had a tough matchup this weekend against #9 Emory, but that did not stop the Panthers from scoring an impressive 7–2 victory. So far this season, the team has fared extraordinarily well against the other top teams in the country. Nathalie van der Reis ’25 and Sahana Raman’25 were stars in the match, each helping to score two points for Middlebury thanks to victories in their respective singles matches and a victory in their doubles match. The Panthers are 4–1 against other teams ranked in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association’s national poll.

PFL Weekly

By BLAISE SIEFER, ELI DIBARI, MARCO FENGLER, CAPTAIN RUDOLPH
Podcast Hosts

PFL weekly returns from spring break with a bang! Drew Petzing ’09, the recently appointed offensive coordinator of the Arizona Cardinals, comes on the show to share his journey from Middlebury to the NFL. Tune in to hear about Drew’s favorite dining hall, the Middlebury memorabilia in his office and his reaction to receiving the Cardinals job offer.

Listen to PFL Weekly on Spotify

Spectators Guide: Baseball, Softball and Men’s Lacrosse return home after a series of away competitions

Courtesy of Colin Borque

Nathalie van der Reis ’25 hits a forehand during women’s tennis’s 7–2 win over

By OWEN PARK
Sports Editor

With the spring season firmly underway, Middlebury teams are busier than ever trying to come out on top. Here is a comprehensive summary of games to watch at Middlebury this week:

Baseball (10–4) vs. Wesleyan, Forbes Field April 7 at 4 p.m. and April 8 at 12 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

After a strong start to the season, the baseball team returns to Middlebury to take on Wesleyan on Friday and Saturday. Although the Panthers are halfway through their season, the Cardinals are just the second NESCAC team they have faced so far. The Panthers will undoubtedly be looking to make quick work of the Cardinals as they prepare for a gauntlet of in-conference games following their Senior Day on April 15.

Softball (10–6) vs. Amherst, Softball Field April 8 at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

After being held to a frustrating 2–2 record against Bowdoin and Bates, the softball team will look to correct course as they host Amherst in a doubleheader on Saturday. This matchup comes at a critical moment in the Panthers’ season as they prepare to embark on six straight NESCAC matchups at home. Given that the Panthers have bested the Mammoths just twice over the past seven seasons, a weekend victory would provide immeasurable momentum for the team as they face a long haul of upcoming April games.

Men’s Lacrosse (7–1) vs. Wesleyan, Youngman Field at Alumni Stadium April 8 at 1 p.m.

Since the season began, the men’s lacrosse team has hit the ground running without looking back. Boasting a 4–1 in-conference record, the Panthers have the chance to add fuel to their great season as they prepare to host Wesleyan on Saturday. Ranked second place in the NESCACs, the Cardinals present a perfect opportunity for the Panthers to reinforce their status as one of the league’s elite. Men’s will also play at home next weekend for their Senior Day against Colby.

BASEBALL TEAM THRIVES DURING THEIR SPRING BREAK TRIP TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By ETHAN VASHEL
Contributing Writer

In the first half of the 2023 season, the Middlebury baseball team has continued their dominance from last season. After losing their first two games of the season, Middlebury has won 10 of their last 12 games and improved to a 10–4 record overall. This stretch includes a 5–1 spring break trip to Los Angeles.

While Middlebury’s offense has scored an impressive 100 runs over this 12-game stretch, the pitching has been more inconsistent, surrendering 51 runs. The pitching staff surrendered two runs or fewer in five games during the stretch, but at the same time, has had some high scoring games.

Despite the inconsistency, the team has experienced a gradual improvement as Coach Mike Leonard has come to better understand the role of each pitcher on the staff. The coaching staff has given a variety of pitchers the opportunity to show off their abilities early in the season, but later in the season, select pitchers will cover the crucial innings.

The team’s current 10–4 record is primarily due to their success during their spring break trip to California. Throughout the team’s trip from March 19-25, stellar hitting and pitching helped propel the team to defeat tough opponents like nationally ranked Cal Lutheran. Here are the scores from the team’s trip:

10–9 loss to Chapman University (10 innings)

The Panthers began spring break with their only loss of the trip. It is always tough to stomach a loss when you score nine runs, and even more so with a two run lead into the bottom of the 10th, but Chapman was able to win the game against Middlebury’s bullpen in extra innings. Andrew Gough ’23 and Kyle McCausland ’25 each had a home run and multi-hit efforts in the high-scoring contest.

18–7 win over Occidental College

Middlebury put 14 runs on the board by the end of the third inning against Occidental. This game provided an excellent opportunity for Coach Leonard to get the young players and backups valuable early season experience toward the end of the game. Lucas Flemming ’24 led the way for the Panthers with a three-run home run and a total of five RBI.

21–14 win over the University of La Verne

This game proved interesting, as Middlebury trailed La Verne until the sixth inning when Flemming launched a three-run home run. A little more back and forth scoring followed, until Middlebury pulled away. Catcher John Collins ’24 launched a pair of home runs, Flemming hit another three run home run and McCausland went four for six with four RBI and a home run. With his two home run performance, Collins brought his career total to 18 and now owns the school home run record. While Middlebury’s pitching struggled in this game, but the defense did not help either, as six unearned runs crossed the plate.

4–3 win over #21 Cal Lutheran University

Justin Lessing ’25 tossed seven innings of two-run baseball, and Henry Gustavson ’24 notched down the save in an impressive victory over a ranked opponent. Jack Stolper ’23 tallied three hits to help provide just enough offense to pull out the win.

6–4 win over Cal Lutheran

In the second game against Cal Lutheran, a strong start guided the Panthers to a close win, as Alex Price ’23 threw six innings of two-run baseball. Sammy Smith ’24 and Collins each homered to ensure the Middlebury victory.

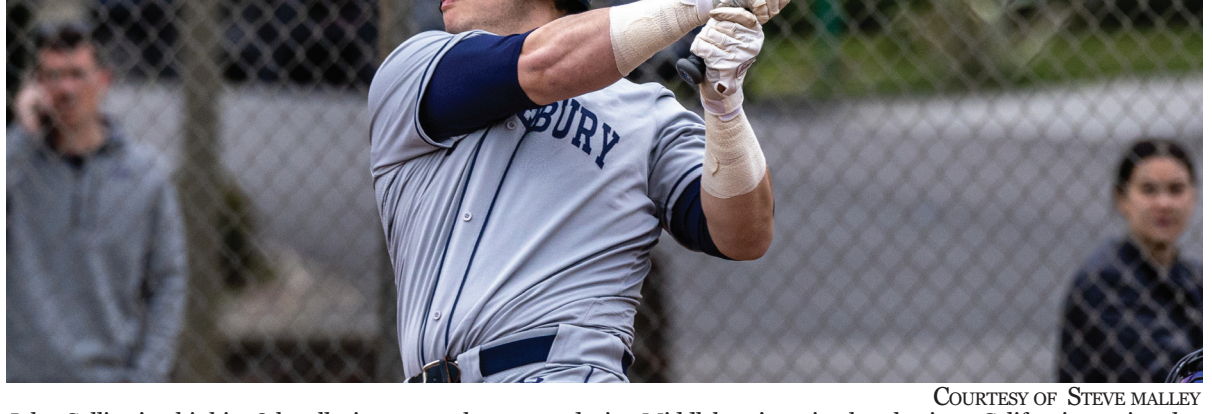
10–0 win over Cal Lutheran

Middlebury finished their three game sweep over Cal Lutheran with an exclamation point as they shut out the Kingsmen 10-0. Freshman Spencer Dessart ’26 turned in an excellent start, going six innings, allowing no runs and recording nine strikeouts. The usual suspects provided the offense — McCausland had three hits, including a pair of doubles, and Collins and Stolper each homered. David Byrne ’24 also added a home run. With the sweep, the Panthers knocked Cal Lutheran out of the NCAA DIII Top 25, moving themselves into the national spotlight and earning votes to be in the Top 25

Coming off their spring break trip, the Panthers had a quick turn around and defeated RPI 5–4 on March 29. Middlebury caused chaos on the basepaths, stealing numerous bases, which allowed for routine ground balls to result in runs. Mitchell Schroeder ’23 hit a huge 3-run home run and Sawyer Duarte ’25 pitched five innings, giving up two earned runs on just one hit. Cole Crider ’24 cemented the victory with the save.

Notably, McCausland has had an incredible start to the season. In the 12 games Middlebury played throughout the month of March, McCausland had a batting average of .500 with 4 home runs, 21 RBI and 5 doubles. McCausland was impressive in 2022 as well, hitting .327 with 5 home runs and 28 RBI, but the sophomore has been on another level 12 games into the 2023 season. His production in the middle of the order has been even more important in the absence of Alec Ritch ’23, who has been out of the lineup since the opening weekend with an upper body injury. Ritch is expected to return to the lineup soon.

The Panthers play their home opener this weekend during a three game series against Wesleyan College at Forbes Field. Their first game is Friday at 4 p.m., and then the team plays a doubleheader starting at 12 p.m. on



Courtesy of Steve Malley

John Collins ’24 hit his 18th collegiate career home run during Middlebury’s spring break trip to California, setting the school’s home run record.